CHAPTER 5

Boston is a cultural and learning center

Schools for the next century

Public art everywhere

Historic preservation for development

Finding your way in the city

Performance spaces in the neighborhoods

5.

Boston is a cultural and learning center

Boston's culture is such a constant presence that it sometimes seems invisible. Almost every corner of Boston offers some kind of significant resource for the cultural and learning life of the city. In some ways, Boston is a victim of its own richness. Because of the prominence of Boston's attractions – such as the Freedom Trail, the Museum of Fine Arts, the New England Aquarium, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the historic neighborhoods of Beacon Hill and the North End, night clubs on Lansdowne Street, and major league sports, to name a few – other cultural sites do not attract the visitors that they otherwise might – mostly because of a lack of adequate promotion and development. In addition, because there are literally hundreds of places to go for the arts and recreation, providing good citywide wayfinding systems is difficult.

But city's cultural wealth – though sometimes hidden – lies also in the neighborhoods. Jamaica Plain offers one of the nation's most eclectic collections of architectural styles. Roxbury also offers stunning architecture, as well as a major art museum, historic battle sites, and great shopping districts that formed the core first of Jewish and then of black residents. Hyde Park is the home of Camp Meigs, where Union soldiers trained for the Civil War. Fenway is the home of museums, concert halls, conservatories, and universities, as well as the site of the first baseball World Series at the site of today's Northeastern University campus. The historic Mission Church, Olmsted park, and Tremont Street give Mission Hill a special character of its own, as do the historic center of medical science at the nearby Longwood Medical Area. Dorchester, from the historic cemetery of Edward Everett Square to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and University of Massachusetts campus to the old Baker Chocolate Factory in Lower Mills, is full of history and culture. Allston-Brighton combines the verve of student life with the historic character of old railroad communities. East Boston and South Boston, both made complete with landfill, have long been centers of immigrant life and ethnic culture. West Roxbury and Roslindale, once farming communities, are classic streetcar suburbs that offer the best of urban and suburban lifestyles and provide the modern answer to the utopian community of Brook Farm in West Roxbury.

The challenge of planning for Boston's cultural and learning spaces is to make the city's signature cultural attractions accessible to all residents of the city – and to improve the accessibility and reach of cultural and artistic programs in the rest of the city. Despite their cultural richness, many neighborhoods feel isolated from the mainstream. The neighborhoods have inadequate transit connections to the city's cultural resources. The city also provides inadequate information and coordination of the resources that are open to people throughout the city. Finally, despite their vibrant cultural life, the neighborhoods have inadequate access to spaces for the arts, music, adult education classes, recreation, and community meetings.

Besides the inherent value of the arts for creating a lively an imaginative community for all residents, Boston's position as a cultural and learning center is also vital to the city's economy. Ever since the American Bicentennial celebration of 1976, Boston has strengthened its economic power and diversity with a strong convention and visitors industry. Some 11 million people visit Greater Boston every year and spend between $2.8 billion and $4.6 billion – about 8 to 13

percent of the local economy. About nine-tenths of these visitors comes from the Northeast. Cultural groups inject $2.56 billion into the region's economy each year. Massachusetts draws larger audiences per capita for ballet, classical music, museums, and theater than any other state in the nation.

Elements of a strong cultural and learning center

In community meetings across the city, Boston's residents have expressed their cultural aspirations with the following five basic principles of planning:

All public buildings should enhance the cultural life of the city and its neighborhoods. Schools, post offices, community centers, health centers, and other public facilities not only should serve their particular functions, but also express the wider aspirations and values of the community. They should provide a "face" to the community that is exciting and welcoming, and which suggests the full range of civic activities that take place inside. The buildings should be designed as urban buildings, with strong connections to the life of the community. All buildings should serve a clear hierarchy of purposes, but at the same time be flexible enough to accommodate changes in programming over the years.

All public spaces should offer a lively cultural environment. A community's cultural life occurs not just in programmed buildings, but wherever people gather and move about. Streets and squares, parks and playgrounds, fairgrounds, business districts, residential neighborhoods, and all civic buildings should provide a diverse range of opportunities for public life. Wherever a person goes should be stimulating. Public art, architecture, storefronts, street life, landscaping, and meeting places should excite the imagination. Every community should boast a clearly identifiable *res publica* – a "public thing" that draws people together while respecting their diverse vantage points.

Access to all cultural and educational spaces should be convenient for all. All of the city's cultural and learning opportunities should be easily accessible by transit and bicycle, and all community spaces should provide a lively pedestrian environment. Automobile access to these spaces is also important, but the car should never overwhelm the character of the places or activities. The city's systems of streets and parking should be planned and maintained to provide efficient access while protecting neighborhoods and institutions.

Finding places and activities should be easy for residents and visitors. Finding all of Boston's cultural opportunities should be as easy as getting money from an ATM kiosk or walking the Freedom Trail. Two levels of "wayfinding" are important: destination and orientation centers all over the city and a system of signage that helps people who travel by foot, bicycle, transit, and cars to find major districts and cultural and educational resources. Cultural districts should have a distinctive signage, lighting, and streetscape that draws visitors and makes them a point of pride for all. The destination and orientation centers should be built and managed by community partnerships in accordance with standards outlined by the City of Boston – building on the Mayor's Street Furniture Initiative.

Institutions and Boston's residents and visitors should have incentives for exploring and connecting the city. Museums, historical societies, schools and universities, historical societies, zoos and nature preserves, and other institutions have much to offer each other in terms of expertise, marketing, and joint programming. By pooling their resources, they might find strategies to address common concerns like transit access or community outreach. A number of institutions have met regularly to explore the possibility of developing a "passport" that guides

residents and visitors to the full range of sites and activities in the city. Another possibility is the creation of a "museum without walls," which would provide exhibits on common themes concerning the history of Boston. Still other possibilities might include erecting information centers at institutions that tell visitors about the activities elsewhere in the city.

INITIATIVE: SCHOOLS FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

Public schools are the places of the greatest common experiences of people in American communities. Schools not only provide the venue for learning from kindergarten through high school, but also provide many of the memorable experiences of communities – concerts and lectures, fundraising, sporting events, voting, continuing education, and a variety of social services. A great school, therefore, must be at the same time a great civic building. In addition to creating dynamic spaces that nurture children in manageable groups, schools also need to relate well to the larger community. A school should serve as the anchor of a community, providing places of lifelong learning, civic activities, and sports and other recreation. Schools should be connected to nearby community facilities and even commercial spaces, as well as convenient means of transportation. School programs should be able to take advantage of nearby museums, parks, urban wilds, historic sites, theaters and concert halls, and meeting spaces. Schools, in short, should be knitted into the fabric of the larger urban environment so that they foster discovery and mutuality.

Vision

In the next generation, as Boston rebuilds or renovates virtually all of Boston's public school buildings, these facilities will reclaim their places as the great centers of community life. All school buildings will provide exciting places for "learning communities" of 200 to 300 students, where principals and teachers will get to know students and their families well enough to track their progress through the system. At the same time, schools have the facilities to provide dynamic places for community activities, such as continuing education and cultural events like concerts and plays. The school and its campus will relate well its community. Teachers and students will be encouraged to explore the neighborhood as part of the educational process – with regular use of parks, historic resources, libraries, playing fields – while at the same time residents will feel welcome to visit the schools for a variety of purposes. School property and nearby neighborhood property will be open to all, as long as the principle users' needs are respected.

The process of school building will begin with the construction of five new schools to meet the goal set by Mayor Thomas M. Menino in his 1999 State of the City address. These schools need to be located at places where they can serve several assignment policies, including the current three-zone choice system, a possible neighborhood assignment system, or ten- or six-zone systems currently under consideration by the BPS. Locations that meet this siting criteria include Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. *[see MAP of existing public school locations]*

Assets and opportunities

Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Superintendent Thomas Payzant have made **school construction and rehabilitation a major priority** for the coming generation. Mayor Menino announced in May 1999 that the City would build new an elementary and middle school on Columbia Road and Melnea Cass Boulevard in Roxbury, respectively. Construction on the schools, which will house 732 and 768 students, respectively, will begin as early as 2000. The Blue Ribbon Commission has produced an exhaustive survey of current school conditions,

projected school populations, and possible school locations. *[see SIDE school building considerations]*

The **state provides funding for 90 percent of the overall cost** of school design and construction, but the city needs to provide the land for schools. Many state regulations for school buildings and campuses present difficulties for Boston. State requirements for 20-acre school sites, for example, are difficult to meet for high-density communities. The city has been able to get waivers of many of the construction requirements, especially standards for playing fields when the school is located near a major city park.

The city has undertaken an ambitious plan to **wire all of its schools for Internet** and other computer programs. This nationally recognized effort requires attention to the design of new schools that will be part of this network. Boston became the first big city school system to link all of its schools, libraries, and community centers into citywide Internet system. Kids Compute 2001 has used $50 million in City funding to leverage $26 million in outside funding, to meet Mayor Menino's goal of providing one computer for every four students by 2001. By the time of the program's completion, the City will invest $125 million. The City's networking initiative was the winner of the Innovations in Education Award in 1998 from the National League of Cities. The next challenge is to insure that technology is integrated into appropriate educational and cultural activities.

The growing **literature on "effective schools"** has found that the school environment plays a major role in how children learn. For example, the most successful schools organize their students, teachers, and administrators as a "small community," in which all participants know each other and see themselves as part of a common enterprise. The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission argues that "there is a shared sense that the schools as presently organized are too large and contain too many students, and that ways must be found to create smaller communities, or 'houses' within the schools, for 300 to 350 students." A group of 200 or 300 enables teachers and students to get to know each other and work together over the long term. For a variety of reasons – legal, logistical, financial – it is probably not always possible to build schools for 200 students. But when building larger school facilities, it makes sense to create the kinds of spaces where groups of 200 can thrive. As the Blue Ribbon Commission stated, it is desirable to "internally zone" schools to provide appropriate learning environments for clusters within school campuses. Schools could offer a number of learning centers for 200-student groups, along with a shared gymnasium, cafeteria, computer lab, public health office, art and music facilities, dance and theater spaces, and more. Such schools would be able to accommodate a dynamic period of experimentation in schools, with greater acceptance of charter and pilot schools and other creative approaches to providing public education.

Boston has **learned from the design mistakes** of the past. The Blue Ribbon Commission concluded, after surveying principals, teachers, and other school users, that the schools designed in the 1960s and 1970s do not meet the needs of everyday learning or the needs of community spaces. According to teachers and administrators surveyed by the Commission, these low-slung, suburban-style buildings excessively programmed some spaces, rendering them difficult to use when educational pedagogies and technologies changed. Other spaces were so loosely designed that it is difficult for teachers and administrators to divide up rooms and identify appropriate uses. The Blue Ribbon Commission concluded: "Open plan classrooms have not worked as well as was hoped. There is a need to simplify circulation and improve site design."

A broader **understanding of urban design** also provides a good foundation for the next wave of school building. Schools built in the 1960s and 1970s reflect that era's concern with

opening the educational process to experimental learning processes. But experience has shown that the school designs did not offer the flexibility to adapt learning spaces to different learning styles. In addition, the suburban character of much 1960s and 1970s development departed from a long tradition of fitting schools in their urban contexts. As the city has been revived in the last generation, there is a greater understanding about the need for buildings to fit into their community context and not to stand alone.

Barriers and challenges

The Boston Public Schools faces a **crisis of capacity**. The schools already operate beyond 100 percent capacity, and many schools lack basic accessibility and facilities such as gymnasiums, computer labs, meeting rooms, and special education facilities. The Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research forecasts a net increase of 3,800 students by 2005 in Boston. The Boston Public School system owns 117 buildings with 10 million square feet of space. Two-thirds of these buildings were built before 1945, with the smallest and oldest schools at the elementary level. Half of all schools have less that 53,000 square feet – a fact that would not be so troubling if it did not translate into overcrowding and inadequate space for basic needs. Although the student population is not expected to increase beyond 65,000 by the year 2005, the need for more school space is expected to be greater because of changing assignment systems, new programs for young children, and higher standards for special education and other programs. Many of Boston's schools do not offer neighborhood access for many of the most populated areas of the city, such as Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, where schools were closed in the 1970s in the wake of court-ordered citywide busing for racial desegregation.

For a variety of reasons – uncertainty over student assignment policy and the complexity of accommodating pilot and charter schools – the BPS faces **uncertainty about what kinds of spaces needed for schools**. As a result, the new schools must provide good, modern facilities all over the city that can be adapted to fit changing demographic circumstances and assignment policies. Adding to the complexity is the shift from half-day to full-day kindergarten classes and the growing numbers of even younger children enrolled in early learning centers. The development of an "inclusion" model for special education, which allows a maximum of 20 students in elementary and middle-school classrooms (compared with a maximum of 30 students in regular middle-school classes), also puts pressure on the system for space and for the allocation of space to serve communities with greater numbers of special-needs children.

Other pressures on school space come from **growing demand for schools as community spaces**. Schools require space for community association meetings, sports and clubs, social services such as 12-step groups and medical testing, government uses such as civil service examinations and voting, adult education and training such as GED and ESL classes, and business uses such as apprenticeship programs.

Projections show that a **population bulge** now beginning school in Boston's system will impact higher levels of the system well into the first decade of the 21st century. Projections my the Massachusetts Institute of Social and Economic Research (MISER) show a peak kindergarten enrollment of 8,545 and a shortage of 4,428 seats in 1995, a peak total elementary school enrollment of 25,295 and a shortage of 8,545 seats in 1997, a peak middle school enrollment of 14,983 and a shortage of 906 seats in 2001, and a peak high enrollment of 20,571 and a shortage of 5,864 seats of in 2005.

In developing new building designs, school planners are **constrained by state regulations** for the size of the buildings and campus, as well as the types of spaces to be located in the school. State regulations set specific standards the size of classrooms for different classes in elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as standards for a variety of administrative and recreational spaces. The state also sets standards for playgrounds, parking, and accessibility. The most difficult standard for schools is the amount of land necessary for new schools, but the state has shown a willingness to provide exemptions if the schools are located near parks that could be used for playing fields and educational spaces. Building standards have proved more difficult for BPS to negotiate exemptions. The state usually does not allow parking exceptions for schools located near transit stations.

The school department has found it **difficult to find sites to build schools**. The City is restricted to sites that it already owns and which meet environmental standards. Many of the City's vacant parcels are not close to residential neighborhoods or are more appropriate for other kinds of development. When the Mayor announced in January 1999 that the City would build five new schools, BPS officials struggled to find parcels in the underserved communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. Uncertainty over the City's future school assignment system complicated the search for buildable sites. One of the constraints is the size of the buildings mandated by the state and recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission.

Actions

The state should . . .

- **Relax building and campus standards to allow Boston's and other cities' schools to reflect and serve the urban environment.** To qualify for state funding of 90 percent of the cost of school construction, school districts need to meet design specifications that are not always appropriate for urban facilities.

The city should . . .

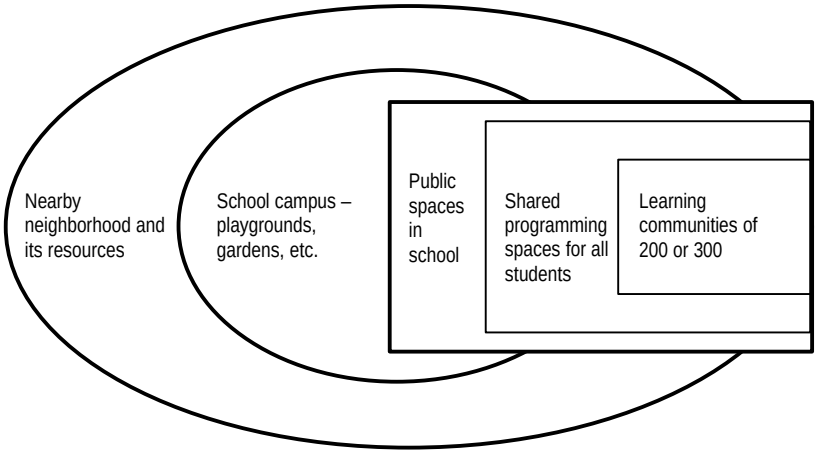
- **Provide incentives for transit, public buildings, and residential development to take place near school buildings to create an "urban village" setting.** Schools should be included in the transit-centered urban village planning for Boston 400. To promote the development of urban villages throughout the city, schools should be located near transit stations and parks. School children should become part of the everyday flow of people in the community.

The Blue Ribbon Commission emphasizes the value of locating schools close to parks and open spaces, so that those resources can be made available as play and learning spaces. But other community assets are also important. Proximity to historic and cultural sites is not only educational but also strengthens the overall character of the school campus. Location near a transit node could make the school more accessible to students, possibly reducing the cost of busing no matter what school assignment policy is in effect. Other community assets, including economic enterprises, could provide after-school opportunities to older students. They could also bring business people and others into a broad circle of support for the schools. It also makes the school's public programs – adult education, health programs, recreation programs – more accessible to the community at large. Ultimately, the school's success depends on its integration in a larger community.

- **Establish a policy for "banking" unused school buildings.** Over the past generation, several schools have been converted to housing and business spaces. Reconverting closed

schools is difficult once they have been closed because of the expense of meeting rehabilitation code standards. Working with the state, the City should identify a strategy to banking unused school and other civic buildings so that they can be used to meet the growing demand for schools.

- **Build schools with high quality, durable materials so that the buildings last a long time.** Develop strategies to identify the best building materials, and join other cities and towns in buying those materials in bulk to save construction costs. All civic buildings should be built to last for generations, using not only the finest materials but also the most community-oriented design principles and creating flexible spaces so that changing pedagogies and activities can be accommodated over time.
- **Build a strong school campus.** The school's campus is even more critical to the school's mission. Playgrounds, playing fields, sitting areas, gardens, and outdoor meeting spaces are critical to the life of the school. As after-school programs are added to the City's education system, such spaces are even more critical. When schools are located on uninspiring campuses, the social life of students and teachers suffers. A number of schools in Boston have undertaken creative efforts to improve their grounds with gardens, composts, playing fields, sitting areas, and the like. The Boston School Yards Initiative, a nationally recognized effort to spruce up playing areas, had organized 40 redesigns of schoolyards by 1999. The City of Boston allocated $2 million annually from its capital budget for the program. That program should be expanded to provide outdoor ampitheaters and other multi-purpose spaces. *[see SIDE Boston Schoolyards Initiative]*
- **Create a gradation of kinds of spaces in the building** – from the most public spaces in the front of the building, to intermediate spaces in the middle, and a zone of learning deep inside the building. The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission emphasizes the importance of creating spaces for community activities such as cultural events, civic meetings, and participatory sports. Integrating these activities into the school building and campus requires a concerted strategy to create public-oriented spaces not only on the outer campus, but also in the front of the building itself. The Commission states in its report: "Members of the community should have access to the school's technology, libraries, recreational space, selected classrooms, cafeterias, and auditoriums at times that are not just limited to school hours." (Volume I, p. 15). Upon entering the school, it is important to provide a number of public spaces where the principal, staff, teachers, and students meet the outside world. Visiting dignitaries, parents, district administrators, and audiences for school events, and outside contractors all should get their first impression of the school in settings that express the aspirations of the school as an institution. These places should be conducive to the specific activities, but also send a message about the school's character. The school is a civic building as well as a learning center.



A number of shared programming activities should be located further inside the school. Libraries, computer labs, art and music classrooms, gymnasiums, and other spaces should be accessible to all of the members of the school. They should also be accessible to other members of the community.

At the core of the school are the learning communities of 200 or 300 students. Here is where academic learning takes place. Here, students and teachers find refuge from the hurly burly of community and school activities. Rather than being distracted by myriad programs that take place in the school – involving health care and hot meals for students, "take out" programs for special-needs students, and a wide range of community programming – students in these learning clusters can focus intently on their studies. Teachers have the opportunity to work in a more controlled environment, where they can get to know their students and build a process of group learning. As important as it is for modern schools to provide a wide range of services, it is even more important for classes to be free of distractions.

- **Make new school buildings flexible enough to adapt to changing pedagogies and community needs.** The Blue Ribbon Commission stated: "Flexibility is the critical component for successful construction of new schools and renovation of existing schools. Classrooms must be designed to accommodate shifting pedagogies, different mixes of learners, and a variety of educational activities. School buildings must be constructed to facilitate various 'zoning' options and to allow for conversion of use as needs change over time. A school's design must allow for multiple uses of the same space by different grades and age groups."

Businesses, institutions, and community groups should . . .

- **Create plans to make schools a vital part of the community.** In today's works of before- and after-school programming, the community needs to play a larger role in the everyday life of the school. Businesses, cultural institutions, and athletic organizations need to contribute to the life of the schools. Every school should have a "friends of" group to help improve the connections between school and community.

INITIATIVE: PUBLIC ART EVERYWHERE

Public art – physical representations designed specifically for the public realm – is essential to the development of community identity and form. Public art encompasses a wide array of displays, such as sculpture, monuments, murals, fountains, amenities such as seating and lights, music and sound. In whatever form it takes, public art inspires people of all ages and helps a community express the ideas and ideals of its culture. Whether it commemorates important history, marks special places, aesthetically enhances the public space it occupies, promotes social gathering and interaction, or serves as a tool for orientation, public art enlivens the environment and makes communities more livable. Public art encourages social gathering and interaction, drawing people to different areas of the city.

Public art takes a number of different forms – both of them vital to the life of the city and its neighborhoods. Permanent art is intended to last forever, so the process of adoption can be controversial and the cost of siting and acquiring art can be expensive. Recent examples of new permanent displays in Boston include the Irish famine memorial on Washington Street in Downtown Crossing and the memorial to the firefighters who lost their lives in the Vendome Hotel fire of 1972. Temporary art can be installed for weeks or months at a time and may require a less rigorous process of adoption. Temporary art can be placed in public buildings, in display cases, and at selected pedestals in parks and other civic spaces. The Boston Parks and Recreation Department's summer arts program provides numerous temporary installations of art and offers opportunities for young people to produce art for public consumption.

Vision

By the time of Boston's 400th anniversary, every neighborhood in the city should boast a public realm rich with public art that articulates the character and aspirations of those communities. Building on a basic infrastructure – with spaces at strategic locations all over the city for permanent and temporary installations, which would be adopted according to rigorous community-based review processes – Boston would showcase the cultural and artistic richness of the city. All public art would reflect the character of its location, adding to its historic, cultural or aesthetic significance. Existing pieces would be cleaned and restored regularly so that they continue to live up to the vision of their original creator. The placement of public art throughout the city would result from a rigorous, participatory process guided by an appropriate agency of commission. This entity would enjoy greater powers to coordinate a master plan for public art, secure funds for the commissioning and placement of public art, and establish clear guidelines for placement and removal of public art. *[see SIDE kinds of public art]*

Assets and opportunities

Boston's many civic, cultural and historic resources provide a **fertile environment** for the development of programs to incorporate public art into the daily experiences of all Bostonians – and City agencies provide a strong context for taking full advantage of those resources. The Boston Art Commission is the city's agency for approving, siting and preserving public art on city-owned property. Its services include Adopt-A-Statue, which raises funds for the maintenance of various monuments in the city; facilitation of community discussion and review of potential projects; technical assistance with regard to the siting of public art; research and

other support for artists; and a speaker's forum. The Commission's powers are limited, but it could provide a foundation for a dynamic, proactive arts policy that serves the needs of all communities in the city. In addition, the Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund, which provides support for open space improvements.

Boston's communities have a number of **great places for art**. The city has a vast network of parks and natural spaces – 10,025 acres in all – but also dozens of activity centers, universities, public squares, boulevards, and business districts. Not all of these places would be appropriate locations for public art. But many of these locations would benefit from the greater definition that installations might lend to the area. Boston's neighborhoods benefit from a vibrant community of artists eager to contribute to the vitality of the public realm.

In recent years, there has been a **growing appreciation of the role of art** in shaping the public realm. Planning efforts from the South Boston Waterfront to Cleveland Circle have stressed the importance of art in improving the attractiveness of communities. The popularity of open studios in Allston, Beacon Hill, the Fenway, Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Roxbury, South Boston, the South End, and the North End is testimony to the strength of the art's grassroots appeal. In 1998, 850 artists participated in open studios, which attracted approximately 12,000 visitors. The impact of the open studios is broad; the Boston Art Dealers Association reports that gallery activity on Newbury Street increases after open studio weekends in other neighborhoods. Public art is a vital economic development tool, enticing visitors to explore neighborhoods and understand how the pieces of the city can work together more synergystically.

Barriers and challenges

Boston lacks an adequate **process for installing public art**. Boston lacks a government agency with enough authority and resources to oversee grassroots planning processes in the neighborhoods. Currently, the five-member Boston Public Art Commission's charge is to approve, site, and preserve permanent works of public art, but the Commission has no role in commissioning works. State legislation allows the Commission only to respond to proposals, not to develop a master plan or even priority projects. More importantly, the lack of funding prevents the Commission from playing a proactive role in siting public art. The Boston Redevelopment Authority oversees much of the public realm in the city; coordination of arts programs with the BRA and other state and city agencies is critical to the effort to improve the presence of art in the neighborhoods.

Boston lacks a dedicated **revenue stream to fund public art**. In its master plan for culture and the arts in Boston, the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs has identified creation of a dedicated stream of funds a major priority. Under the current system, communities are forced to seek funding from a variety of public, private, and nonprofit sources. The communities more skilled at "grantsmanship" have a better chance to get public art, regardless of the demonstrated need.

Communities bear the burden of developing proposals for art in public spaces, but they lack the expertise that would help them make informed decisions about art acquisitions. Residents possess an understanding of their communities and what ideas and values are important to express artistically. But even the most artistically inclined communities would benefit from access to a broader knowledge of the economic, siting, construction, maintenance, and even aesthetic issues involved in the placement of public art.

The City **lacks a comprehensive stewardship policy** to maintain and conserve all of the city's public art. The city's Adopt-a-Statue program maintains statues selected by the partner, but does not extend to smaller or less-popular works. Projects financed by the Browne Fund have built-in plans for maintenance – a worthy model for public art throughout the city.

Boston **lacks a process to remove unappreciated public art**. Over the years, a number of installations have lost their appeal – because of changing tastes, neighborhood composition, or simply recognition that the installation is not of high quality. But Boston lacks procedures to remove art from the public domain. State law prohibits the alteration or removal of public art without the permission of the artist or artist's estate.

Boston **lacks a good contract for artists**. Many arts projects do not advance because of the prohibitive costs of insurance and bonding. The legal relationships between artists, state and city agencies, and corporations is often unclear, to the detriment of working artists. (A standard contract would be an integral element of a comprehensive process for the placement, funding, and stewardship of public art, which is proposed by the Office of Cultural Affairs in the master plan completed in December 1999.)

Commissioning and siting **public art can be controversial**. Even in the best circumstances, people in the neighborhoods will disagree about the need for public art, its quality, the appropriate siting, financing schemes, design of the site near the installation, and maintenance plans. Even in the best of circumstances, public art can create serious divisions within the community. Absent any citywide standards and procedures for each community to consider public art, such controversies are bound to make it difficult to make art a vital part of our communities.

The **lack of a policy for the temporary installation of art** undermines the city's efforts to reach out to a broad constituency of artists, educators, residents, and merchants. The City can dramatically improve the aesthetic character of Boston's communities by developing a comprehensive approach to temporary installations during special periods (e.g., First Night, Patriots Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving) and in special places in the city.

Despite widespread interest in art, **many communities lack constituencies for public art** because of the lack of installations and inadequate public efforts to expand public art and involve citizens in siting and selection of art in recent decades. Many neighborhoods have not added art to their public spaces for decades – some since the installation of World War I memorials. As a result, residents have not imagined how public art can improve the overall quality of the urban experience. In order for public art to develop more vocal and devoted neighborhood constituencies, the Boston Arts Commission or other city agency should engage all neighborhoods in a thoughtful process of identifying their priorities for public art in their communities.

Actions

The city should . . .

- **Establish a policy for commissioning works of art.** Either the Boston Arts Commission's mission should be expanded to include commissioning works or the City should establish a separate process under the Office of Cultural Affairs. Such a policy would provide a clear process for communities interested in developing public art. The tool kit would include professional consulting from public art experts, professional planners or mediators who can work with communities to identify community desires and opportunities, a public process for writing a

request for proposals (RFP's) and assessing proposals, access to reliable public funding, standard contracts, and thorough maintenance systems.

- **Establish a community process for adoption of public art.** This process should engage a broad spectrum of people, including representatives of the city at large and representatives of the community. The process should be staffed by a professional public art expert with guidance from other public art professionals (e.g., landscape architects, architects, archeologists, art historians).
- **Remove legal and insurance barriers to art installation.** Advocates report that their efforts to install art in neighborhoods suffer over confusion over which entities will be responsible for caring for the art, acquiring space, and insuring installations against possible damages. The City should consider creating a legal entity, directed by a community-based board, with set numbers of artists, legal experts, and arts management experts, to provide technical advice throughout the process of installing and maintaining art.
- **Develop a comprehensive plan for adding public art to places throughout Boston's neighborhoods.** Starting with a comprehensive survey of existing works and an assessment of which areas are underserved, the City should identify priority areas and make technical support available for communities that petition for a public art program.
- **Generate a steady stream of capital and operating revenues for the arts**. Establish a program to provide a steady stream of funding for the arts, neighborhood parks, and other community-based resources. To assure a strong sense of community "ownership," community organizations might be encouraged to match government grants with their own funds or sweat equity. To create the necessary funds for public, Boston should look to other cities as models. Most major cities have percent-for-art programs through which a small portion (usually 1 to 2 percent) of certain construction costs are allocated to public art. Others have different systems, such as endowment programs, for making art accessible to the public. Boston does not have a percent-for-art program, but does receive money through programs such as Adopt-A-Statue and endowments such as the Browne Fund should identify the condition of works throughout the city and standards by which to determine which pieces need to be restored should be established. *[see SIDE public art funding]*
- **Establish community partnerships for community art**. The community process for approving new temporary and permanent art installations should be part of a broader process for determining the long-term vision and plan for arts in each neighborhood. Neighborhoods might wish to create Community Arts Partnerships that solicit ideas for improvements in the public realm and provide options for residents to vote on. City projects like Main Streets, the Boulevards Program, the Schoolyards Initiative – as well as existing community organizations like historical societies, universities, museums and other cultural other organizations – can provide the vehicles for getting community input and commitment for public art.
- **Establish procedures and locations for temporary displays of art**. Limited displays can add as much to the life of the community as permanent installations. Communities should be invited to participate in a community planning process to identify sites and formats for the placement of all kinds of temporary art, ranging from display of photography and painting to erection of sculptures, mobiles, and other three-dimensional art. An empowered Boston Arts Commission or other agency could oversee a comprehensive process of temporary art installation in each neighborhood of the city.

The City could provide funding through NICE and other city programs for improvements of public spaces. In addition, local boards of trade could establish "windows on the arts" programs,

in which stores would provide window space for public displays of all kinds of visual arts. The city could provide awards for neighborhoods that were judged to create the most creative displays and art pieces; this program could be modeled on the Department of Neighborhood Development's annual gardens competition, with prize money going for improvements to the public spaces like squares, landscaping, or new art installations.

- **Establish procedures for removing unwanted public art.** Other cities provide models for the removal of unwanted public art. Portland has a clear policy for decommissioning public art; a process of review begins 10 years after the art's installation or when the piece has been damaged or allowed to deteriorate.

INITIATIVE: HISTORIC PRESERVATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

The essence of a city's vitality and diversity is its ability to create a mixture of old and new buildings, parks, and other spaces. Great cities are organic. They develop over time, adapting old physical forms to the needs of new imperatives and activities. The provide a rich diversity of spaces that invite all kinds of activities to take place – and foster a synergy between the activities that gives rise to creativity. Old buildings give the city a depth that cannot be matched by any kind of stylistic ornamentation. Like rings on a tree, old buildings instruct us about the evolution of people and communities. Because the best old buildings are adaptable to a wide range of activities, they always find a way to fit into the larger community context. Because the buildings and the community grew up together, the buildings offer a frame of reference for everything else in the community.

Cities need to find ways of integrating their historic buildings and other resources into the longterm development of the neighborhoods. Ultimately, historic preservation is about managing change. The goal is not to fossilize the past, but make the past an integral part of an evolving community. It is about making the city more authentic and diverse, a place where people experience history in their everyday lives, not just a "special" attraction of interest to special groups and events. Preserving the past is a necessary part of seizing the opportunities of the future.

Vision

In the next generation, Boston will develop a comprehensive strategy for enhancing *living historic spaces* and *distinctive historic resources* that cover all periods of Boston's history. Historic spaces will be enhanced in a way that makes them relevant for changing times and circumstances – part of the evolving built environment in the City. At the same time, the city will single out some significant historic sites as special attractions that should be *restored* (depiction of the resource at a specific earlier period) rather than *rehabilitated* (common treatment allows for change necessary to satisfy present-day demands). Planning will occur within a broad community context, with the formation of creative partnerships that promote strong civic "ownership" of spaces.

The major goal of historic development should be to strengthen the urban fabric of Boston – the dense, mixed-use, transit-oriented character of the City and its neighborhoods. Historic development and preservation should be integrated with efforts to improve parks and natural spaces, strengthen cultural institutions, develop campus and institutional master plans, and coordinate transportation planning.

Assets and opportunities

A number of agencies and organizations are involved in historic preservation and development. Those organizations include the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston Landmarks Commission, Boston Parks and Recreation Department, Boston Transportation Department, Department of Neighborhood Development, and Department of Public Works; and organizations such as the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston Preservation Alliance, and Historic Boston, Incorporated.

Boston also has a **tradition of respect for its historic resources** and built environment. Community groups like Historic Neighborhoods, the Massachusetts Historical Society, Historic Massachusetts, Inc., as well as a number of neighborhood historic associations. Since the American Bicentennial of 1976, Boston has been known worldwide as a city that venerates its history. Concern for authentic and durable buildings and communities extends far beyond the old Shawmut Peninsula and includes neighborhoods like Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, the South End, Back Bay, and others.

In recent years, the **redevelopment of historic buildings has been the lynchpin of community development**. Historic brewery buildings in Jamaica Plain and Mission Hill, the Baker Chocolate Factory in lower Mills, and the Ferdinand Department Store building in Roxbury are just three examples of renovation projects that have substantially improved the overall quality of Boston's neighborhoods. *[see SIDE rehab pays]*

Barriers and challenges

Many of the **best buildings have been redeveloped already**. Buildings that showed the greatest promise for redevelopment have received the greatest attention in the past two decades – leaving behind buildings with greater damage. Many of these buildings would not be appropriate for major preservation work because of the high costs, lesser importance as historic structures, and lack of connection to other community resources. *[see SIDE redevelopment challenges]*

Getting **funding from the federal and state governments is often complex** and difficult.

Many **buildings have deteriorated** because the lack of basic maintenance during idleness. If buildings are allowed to deteriorate, it gets more and more difficult to redevelop them. Weather damage, lack of maintenance to buildings and grounds, and stripping of internal spaces is common to long-unused structures.

Actions

The state should . . .

- **Pass the Community Preservation Act to make funding available in cities and towns for preservation.** This state initiative provides cities and towns with new options for raising money for parks and natural spaces, historic resources, and neighborhood business districts. *[see SIDE CPA, Chapter 3]*
- **Reform the rehabilitation code requirements on a state level.** Following the example of the State of New Jersey, which has seen inner-city rehabilitation increase 50 percent with the adoption of code reforms, Massachusetts could lead a renaissance of inner-city communities with responsible reform of its rehab codes. Rehabilitation codes should be separated from new-building codes to insure that unnecessary code demands are not made on people bring old buildings back to life. The goal of rehab codes should be to assure the safety of buildings, not just to meet standards that were designed for new buildings. Redevelopers should be allowed flexibility on standards for windows, doors, stairs, frontage, elevators, and fire escapes as long as effective standards are adopted to assure that buildings are safe and accessible. *[see SIDE rehab subcode]*

The city should . . .

- **Establish a comprehensive database of buildings and sites, development projects, ownership records, funding sources, and legal requirements for historic renovation.** Efforts to protect and redevelop old buildings suffer from the lack of reliable information. Although the city benefits from publications that document many important buildings – such as Historic Boston Inc.'s casebooks of buildings in Boston's neighborhoods – preservationists often struggle to get reliable and timely information about the challenges of preservation. The Boston Landmarks Commission or another city agency should have the resources to develop and maintain this database. Over time, the database should include photographic inventories and other detailed information about all old buildings in the city. The database should be available to the public free of charge through Internet sites, computer disks, and other formats.
- **Focus redevelopment efforts on schools, churches, and industrial buildings.** Establish a working group to consider strategies for making the best use of historic *school buildings,* and plan the new school buildings of the future. Develop strategies to prevent viable school buildings from being removed from the school inventory – such as a "banking" of school buildings to preserve their availability. Work with the Catholic Archdiocese, the partners for Sacred Spaces (Philadelphia), and other groups to develop a long-range plan for redeployment, sale, and reuse of church buildings. Devise a comprehensive list of possible kinds of reuse, and their pluses and minuses (e.g., social services, condos, recording spaces, restaurants, health clinics, galleries). Develop a system for determining whether market forces are most adequate, adaptive reuse, or demolition of industrial buildings. Build on the model of the redevelopment of the Charlestown Navy Yard. Link these analyses with a larger determination of where industrial activities should be located in the City of Boston.
- **Improve interpretation of historic sites.** Boston uses a number of different styles of signage, plaques, trails, and other devices to mark historic sites. Greater consistency could enhance the legibility of the city for residents and visitors alike. In addition, the city should consider creative new ways to tell Boston's history. Photographic plaques that tell the story of long-lost buildings and places – like Scollay Square, the West End, and the Brook Farm – could bring the past alive more dramatically than signs. The Freedom Trail has enjoyed enormous success as a wayfinding and interpretive system. Other neighborhoods might find ways of connecting their historic and cultural spaces through "charm bracelets" and other streetscape improvements.
- **Assess the historic impact for major developments.** Develop comprehensive strategies to identify the *impact* on historic resources of economic development in the neighborhoods. Establish standards and processes for infill development in the neighborhoods that insures that such development will be consistent with the historic and other character of the neighborhoods. Develop a comprehensive notification system for the closing or rehabilitation of historic structures. The environment surrounding historic sites.
- **Adopt priorities for redevelopment of historic buildings and sites.** Using the city's growing database of historic buildings and sites, the City of Boston should determine which redevelopment projects for historic structures and sites should receive priority for funding and other assistance. Under the direction of the Boston Redevelopment Authority's preservation planning and development specialist and the Boston landmarks Commission, this prioritization should consider a number of factors:
  - the historic significance of the structure
  - the importance of the structure to the larger environment

- the full range of redevelopment possibilities
- impacts on the neighborhood, and
- adequacy of relevant transportation systems.

- **Establish a single coordinator for preservation development**. Assign Boston Redevelopment Authority staff to oversee a wide range of issues regarding historic resources and development, including: applying identifying opportunities for appropriate development of historic resources, streetscape, capital spending plans, early warning systems (e.g., post office buildings), and other issues. Establish a citywide process of information-sharing and project coordination of all historic structures and related issues. Identify a comprehensive list of the sources of redevelopment funding for different kinds of historic properties. Integrate all casebooks and other materials about government programs into comprehensive databases accessible by computer. Share information about neighborhood historic resources Citywide, with information available on the City's Web page and paper versions available from the BRA and Landmarks Commission. Establish a process in which different City and Commonwealth agencies gather on a quarterly basis to detail existing short- and long-term historic preservation issues, existing projects to address those issues, and future planning. Engage existing programs such as the mayor's Office of Business Services and Main Streets in efforts to develop visions for longterm development of historic resources. Develop a "tool kit" for developers and community groups to use as they consider development and other projects in historic areas.
- **Address the impact of "spot zoning" on historic structures**. Because of the hundreds of development and redevelopment projects in the city, the historic impact of projects is not always presented to zoning officials. All development projects should be subject to a comprehensive analysis of their impact on historic structures and sites. The city's database on historic sites, redevelopment tools, and zoning standards should be consulted before the approval of every development project. The Boston Landmarks Commission should issue a recommendation on the application of every development proposal that involves a historically significant building or site. The BRA's preservation planning and development specialist should convey that recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Businesses and institutions should . . .

- **Develop financial tools that make it easier to rehabilitate existing buildings.** Banks typically determine their risks for inner-city loans from the appraised value of properties. But banks typically determine mortgage amounts for inner-city loans based upon the appraised value; however, buyers of historic structures need rehabilitation funds above and beyond the cost of acquisition. To encourage local lenders, the City should work with secondary-market institutions like the Federal Home Loan Bank to provide lending pools that protect lenders from unnecessary risks and encourage reinvestment in old communities.

Community organizations should . . .

- **Form creative partnerships with groups throughout the City.** They need to work together to identify the potential for historic enhancement and development in every neighborhood. They need to locate funding and institutional resources. They need to form partnerships with business groups, cultural institutions, schools, colleges and universities, religious institutions. They need to develop projects that exploit the locational and natural advantages of the neighborhoods. Residents develop a deep sense of commitment to their communities when their everyday lives are connected to specific buildings, gardens, and other

spaces. Joint efforts to improve historic and other resources in the neighborhoods could help these institutions as well as their communities.

- **Work with existing programs like Main Streets and the Boston Boulevards Initiative.** Main Streets has established a track record as one of the more creative and grassroots-oriented programs in the city. Although the program primarily aims to improve the business climate of neighborhood retail districts, it has contributed to the enhancement of the larger public realm. To the extent that volunteers and funders commit themselves, Main Streets can develop more programs to improve the historic character of the neighborhoods. The Boston Boulevards Initiative and the Boston Schoolyards Initiative also present important opportunities for historic marking and development. Organizations like Historic Boston and Historic Massachusetts have developed programs for restoration of buildings and districts, as well.

Advocacy groups should . . .

- **Identify projects that combine broader goals of community revitalization with preservation.** It is a truism of preservation that the best way to save a building is to use it. Buildings are most likely to be used when they are part of a vital community, with strong connections to business, residential life, cultural activities, parks and natural spaces, and transportation systems. Every time preservationists identify buildings and historic places to be saved, they should also provide an analysis of how that building could fit into the larger context of the community. In this way, reports such as the *Preservation Revolving Casebook,* prepared by Historic Boston, Inc., would be invaluable for community-builders as well as preservationists. Such analyses could begin to identify allies and funding for preservation projects as well as heighten the relevance of preservation for the larger community.

SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: FINDING YOUR WAY IN THE CITY

Because of their essential complexity – geographic, institutional, historic – cities require special effort to help residents and visitors find the resources that they want to see and use. The greater a city's resources, the more that city needs to make special efforts to guide people to those resources. Cities like Boston face an ever greater challenge because of their gradual development over time. Unlike Washington, D.C. and Manhattan Island, Boston's street system has no single defining characteristic. The layout changes from the North End to Government Center, from Back Bay to the South End, from Jamaica Plain to Roslindale, from South Boston to Dorchester. While these different layouts create a vibrant individuality in the neighborhoods, they also make it difficult for people to learn the "logic" of Boston. At the very least, cities like Boston need a consistent and comprehensive set of street signs, strategies to identify key districts, a hierarchy of signs to identify major and minor attractions. The city also needs to provide more comprehensive information at key nodes throughout the city, so that residents and visitors can learn about new places as well as find known places.

Vision

By the time of Boston's 400th anniversary celebrations in 2030, the city will provide a simple and comprehensive system of signage and orientation to help residents and visitors find and discover all of the resources of the city. Street signage will identify street names and special districts at every intersection in the city. Residents and visitors will be guided to the city's myriad attractions – parks, museums and theaters, stadiums and arenas, schools, historic districts, government buildings – with a strong system of marking and signage. In addition, at all of the city's major crossroads will stand attractive orientation centers and kiosks, which will help people to find out about places and activities all over the city and region. Wherever you are in the city, you will be able to learn about places to go – and how to get there by foot, transit, or car.

Assets and opportunities

Boston has taken the first step toward a citywide orientation system with a **street furniture initiative** that will result in the placement of bus shelters, public toilets, trash bins, and other street furniture throughout the city.

Other citywide and institutions programs provide models for implementation of orientation efforts. Main Streets has strengthened the legibility of its 19 Boston districts with attractive signs and banners. The Longwood Medical Area has set a standard for orientation with its street signs, and the New England Aquarium has set a standard for public outreach with the creation of a Big Dig Visitors Center. Each of these systems was established in the absence of a citywide signage plan.

Businesses support improvements in the quality of the public realm and to define activity centers better. The city's Main Streets program has provided strong evidence that well-designed, attractive, and legible public places improves the business climate and quality of life for all. Other efforts to improve public spaces – most notably, the development of Post Office Square, the improvements along Harborwalk, and various "adopt-a-square" programs – underscore the importance of public appearances and legibility for business.

Barriers and challenges

The biggest problem of orientation in Boston is the **scattered approach** followed so far. Many institutions take it upon themselves to provide direction to their facilities. The most visible example is the Longwood Medical Area, which provides distinctive and legible street signs that look nothing like all other street signs in Boston. Visitors sometimes mistakenly think the LMA is not part of the city of Boston because of the area's street signs. Other attractions – like the Franklin Park Zoo, New England Aquarium, Science Museum, Fenway Park – also provide their own signage. Their systems of signage tend to be haphazard and unreliable because they are not included in a larger citywide system of signage.

A second problem of orientation has to do with the lack of what might be called **"off-street" orientation**. Visitors and even residents often do not know about the existence of many of the city's economic, cultural, historic, and recreational attractions. At a handful of places near the center of the city – near the Park Street T station, at Copley Square, and near Faneuil Hall and City Hall – visitors can find some rudimentary information centers that provide maps and information about hotels, plays, and other attractions. But even these places do not offer consistent appearances and information to constitute the makings of a system of orientation.

Producing a strong system of signage and orientation is difficult because of the **conflicting needs of jurisdictions and institutions**. The federal, state, and city governments own and operate most of the streets, and each level of government has its own understanding of who they should be serving and how. Quasi-independent authorities like the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan District Commission have their own designs and standards for signage and orientation. Many institutions and neighborhoods desire to create their own "signature" systems that would not be compatible with a citywide system.

Cost and coordination pose the final set of challenges to a citywide system of orientation. Completely overhauling the many systems of signage in to one coherent system would be very expensive and may require a bond issue. Even with the necessary funding, a comprehensive effort to improve signage and orientation would require coordination of a number of federal, state, and local officials, as well as major private and nonprofit institutions.

Actions

The city should . . .

- **Develop and implement comprehensive standards for signage**. This system should be consistent, distinctive, and clear. Someone looking for information should be able to find it by looking for a common type of sign all over the city. Different kinds of places should be noted with variations on the standard sign. Signs should be visible for both drivers and pedestrians, and they should be visible soon enough to guide people to the destination. *[see SIDE signage]*
- **Build destination centers at Boston's major attractions**. Destination centers should accommodate the hundreds of thousands of people who converge on the major crossroads of the city. Destination centers would provide basic information and maps, as well as museum-like displays about the destination and environs, and dining and other transportation information. As technology advances, ATM-style kiosks could offer ways to book hotel reservations and special telephones could offer audio tours of nearby sights. Current major destinations include the New England Aquarium, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Charles River Esplanade, the U.S.S. Constitution, and the Freedom Trail. Future destinations are likely to be the Boston Harbor

Islands National Park boat launch, the new South Boston Seaport District, and the Franklin Park Zoo.

- **Build orientation kiosks at neighborhood crossroads throughout the city**. Because visitors enter Boston from all directions and residents are based in all sections of the city, there is a need for orientation devices all over. Community activity centers – such as Mattapan Square, Upham's Corner, Kenmore Square, Cleary Square, and Roslindale Village – should provide basic orientation with maps and brochures. These kiosks ideally would include computer terminals with data on events, places, directions, as well as a telephone hookup to operators with knowledge of Boston's activities and places. The City of Boston developed a model for this project in 1999 when it installed ATM-style kiosks all over Boston where residents can transact basic business such as paying taxes and parking fines.

SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: PERFORMANCE SPACES IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Students of urban life have commented that cities are great places of theater – places where people are free to shed their identities and become something new, if only for the life of a festival or celebration. But the need for artistic and theatrical expression goes far beyond the everyday life of streets and parks. People of all ages need special places where they can perform. In all neighborhoods, people need a way to express and develop themselves in theater, music, dance, debate, lectures, community meetings, and civic presentations. The public realm requires not only good spaces open to all kinds of expression – the "public square" – but also spaces that can accommodate specific kinds of expression.

Vision

By the time of Boston's fourth centennial, assure that every neighborhood in the city has the facilities it needs to promote a rich cultural and civic life for people of all ages. Working with efforts to rehabilitate or construct new school buildings, enhance the citywide and neighborhood park systems, enhance transit areas, and build neighborhood "charm bracelets," make sure that every community enjoys easy access to spaces for all kinds of cultural, artistic, and civic expression. When possible, build these performance spaces into existing buildings.

Assets and opportunities

Boston's neighborhoods have a wealth of cultural and artistic programs that provide the opportunities for young and old to be active players in the cultural scene. Boston has 16,000 resident artists and 25 nonprofit cultural organizations. Attendance at major arts venues has grown dramatically as a new generation of cultural leaders has brought modern approaches to curatorship, events, and marketing. The Museum of Fine Arts draws 1.5 million visitors a year and has announced plans to expand its facility on Huntington Avenue. Other institutions – the Wang Center, Gardner Museum, Boston Ballet, Huntington Avenue Theater, Strand Theater, Riverside Theaterworks, Boston Center for the Arts, Museum of the National Center for Afro-American Artists, and Dance Umbrella – have increased their profile in the city as well. Universities and conservatories pump life into their communities and cultural realms. The number of films shot in Boston has more than doubled in recent years, employing thousands in part-time jobs and heightening the city's cultural profile internationally. Boston has also become Boston is also the hub of culture for New England. Massachusetts itself is home to 2,693 arts, humanities, and interpretive science organizations and 336 local cultural councils. A 1996 survey found that the nonprofit cultural industry produces an annual economic impact of $2.56 billion and helps the state to attract 28 million tourists a year.

Many community groups have developed innovative approaches to facility issues. The Riverside Theaterworks in Hyde Park, for example, makes its space available for other community events and demand is high; the organization's unique payment plan, based on a percentage of ticket sales, makes it affordable to more groups than would a flat fee.

The city also has a strong physical infrastructure of schools, community centers, theaters, concert halls, and other public performance and meeting spaces. Bostonians have shown an interest in expanding the community performance spaces however they can. Community activists

worked for years to create the new Boston Arts Academy, which opened in September 1998. In preparation for a festival of films produced by students, Charlestown residents turned out on a weekend in June 1999 to renovate the auditorium at the Warren Prescott School.

The city's master plan for cultural affairs will provide a strong agenda for public, private, and nonprofit groups all over the city.

Barriers and challenges

The city offers **inadequate spaces for performance, rehearsals, and administration**. Many cultural organizations experience difficulty finding spaces for their performances, and the better performance spaces are overburdened. Cultural leaders say the city needs more middle-sized performance spaces all over the city for the community-based arts to flourish. Existing facilities are often inadequate in terms of comfort – seating, views, amenities – as well as back-stage spaces and equipment. Cultural organizations report that finding practice space is often even more difficult than finding performance spaces. Many organizations must cart around their equipment to practices at churches and schools – not only an inconvenience, but also damaging to expensive investments in instruments, sets, and other supplies.

Coordination of cultural and artistic programs is minimal in Boston, creating unnecessary duplication of effort and a lack of access to theaters and other settings for programming. Museums, colleges and universities, theaters and musical organizations, libraries, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies do not have an active civic organization to facilitate planning. In the private-oriented cultural environment of Boston, institutions are hard-pressed to pursue their own financial and programming needs let alone than contribute to citywide efforts.

The **design of many potential performance spaces** is uninviting. In many cities and towns, public school buildings offer the principle venues for community theater and music. But many Boston school buildings that are intended to serve as community gathering places – like the English School in Jamaica Plain and the Hennigan School in Mission Hill – do not present an accessible "face" to the community and are difficult to navigate internally. Other schools' performance spaces are outdated. Inadequate space in auditoriums, outdated practice facilities and storage spaces, the lack of sound and lighting equipment, and deficient maintenance make it hard for community groups to pursue their artistic endeavors.

The **costs of cultural programs** makes rental of spaces impossible for many community organizations. By its very nature, cultural and artistic expression of "labor intensive" – that is, it requires constant supervision and management as well as teaching and coaching. Running programs for theater, music, and studio art is expensive, squeezing arts organizations' funds for performance spaces.

The **subpar quality of performance spaces** subtly undermines efforts of community groups to build audiences for their productions. In an age of many entertainment choices – video, cable television, and computers – audiences are more finicky about acoustics, sightlines, seating, restrooms, and box-office service hours. To make the experience of going to the theater or concert hall more enticing, Boston's arts organizations must be able to offer the level of comfort and convenience found at other entertainment venues. The problem is exacerbated by excessive booking of performance spaces, since overuse makes it harder to maintain the buildings – and shabby facilities discourage cultural patrons.

Questions of legal liability impede open access to performance spaces in the neighborhoods. School children at some schools are not allowed to use nearby parks during school hours – even when the school lacks adequate play space and the park is unused – because of questions about what agency or entity would be liable for damages should accidents occur. In most cases, agreements on liability can be developed among agencies, separate agreements for particular schools and parks are cumbersome for already overburdened school administrators.

Access to cultural institutions is inadequate. Public transportation provides inadequate access to major and minor cultural venues throughout the city. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority does not have a strategic approach to dealing with the transportation needs of cultural institutions or the tourist industry, despite the powerful role of their activities in the economic life of the city and region. Most efforts to address transportation needs are private, lacking the collective marketing and operational power that a coordinated effort might bring. Shuttles for the Museum of Fine Arts have been successful, but they are limited to easing the traffic and parking problems associated with major shows such as the Picasso and Monet exhibits. A shuttle system for the Franklin Park Zoo failed to attract enough riders to reduce congestion or traffic problems in the area. Many nearby residents and park users did not even know of the shuttle's existence. Neighborhood theaters and music organizations have expressed a desire to maintain the community "feel" of their programs while at the same time encouraging other city residents to attend. But transportation is often unreliable during off-peak hours when theaters are open.

Actions

The state should . . .

- **Devise legal protections to encourage agencies and institutions to share spaces.** Because of legal and financial burdens associated with sharing spaces with other organizations, many performance and practice spaces stand idle at times when educational and cultural organizations need them the most. Development of a standards agreement that allows for greater sharing of theaters, concert halls, studios, and storage facilities would give Boston's cultural communities the resources they need to make the most out of the city's resources. The Boston Public Schools and Boston Community Centers should be at the forefront of this process, but should also be joined by churches, business spaces, colleges and universities, and union halls.
- **Design new civic buildings to provide flexibility in programming.** The effort to build new schools for the next generation provides an historic opportunity to expand space for cultural programming. With the Mayor's vision of lifelong and daylong learning as a guide, new schools should be designed to provide spaces for a wide range of community groups. School buildings should not only provide adequate space for community cultural activities, but they should also be designed to make a strong physical connection with their neighborhoods. Buildings should look inviting, with an open look and landscape designs that blend school grounds with the larger public realm. These spaces should be coordinated on a citywide basis by a coordinator based in the Office of Cultural Affairs, with the assistance of public agencies and private organizations.

The city should . . .

- **Identify the specific cultural space needs of all communities.** Building on the 1999 survey conducted by the Office of Cultural Affairs, every neighborhood should develop a site needs assessment that is updated every two years. The Office of Cultural Affairs should publish a

set of criteria that explain how site needs should be determined and provided over the long term. The data gathered in this process should be made available to the public on the Internet and neighborhood associations and other community organizations should be invited to make proposals for additions to their facilities every year.

- **Maintain a database for all cultural spaces.** Boston 400 and the Office of Cultural Affairs developed a database that lists all meeting, performance, and office spaces throughout the city. This database should be updated weekly by a cultural site coordinator in the Office of Cultural Affairs. Reserving space in public and nonprofit buildings all over the city should be streamlined so that groups can find the spaces they need quickly and efficiently.
- **Design new civic buildings to provide flexibility in programming.** The City will spend hundreds of millions of dollars in the next generation building schools, community centers, health centers, early-learning centers, and other public facilities. If designed for a wide range of uses, these structures can provide much of the space that community groups need for the performing arts.

Chapter 5 SIDEBARS

BSYI: Building on Existing Assets

The Boston Schoolyards Initiative, established in 1995 to improve outdoors learning and play spaces in Boston's public schools, has typified the Menino Administration's philosophy of building on existing community resources. Rather than building brand-new facilities, the Schoolyards Initiative aims to improve the spaces that families and children already use. Kirk Meyer, the director of the program, explains this approach to community-building:

Until recently, however, we have ignored what are arguably the most valuable and important open spaces in Boston – public schoolyards. Schools surrounded by barren wastelands of cracked and aging asphalt send an undeniably negative message to students about how we value them and their external environment. If children represent the future, then the long-term sustainability of our cities is directly related to how we foster a sense of environmental awareness among today's youth.

The Boston Schoolyard Initiative is a model for promoting community-driven sustainable development, environmental stewardship, responsible public policy, and outdoor experimental education in the Boston Public Schools. This five-year public-private partnership, funded by the City of Boston and a collaborative of local foundations, is revitalizing Boston's underutilized schoolyards. The project incorporates a participatory design process in which groups of parents, students, teachers, school administrators, custodians, local residents, business, and community-based organizations design improvements to their school grounds with the help of contracted landscape architects.

As a result, we have created outdoor classrooms and creative play spaces where students can gather for recreation and engage in hands-on learning activities such as gardening, mapping and measuring, orienting, drama productions, art, music and poetry writing. Teachers, students, community-based educators, and neighborhood youth programs that have been part of the development process become stakeholders with an interest in utilizing the new schoolyard for a variety of activities.

Involvement in the design phase has encouraged educators to be proactive in constructing schoolyard improvements that will make environmental lesson activities easy to conduct. The establishment of clearly defined areas, the routing of pedestrian traffic, the separation of active and passive gathering spots, and the creation of stages, amphitheaters, natural areas, or gardens are providing an infrastructure that encourages multiple opportunities for creative play and academic learning.

Kinds of public art

(*This sidebar will be a page or possible 1 2/2 or 2 pages. It will have this brief intro with lots of hopefully color photos; the photos should be thumbnails, small so we can get lots on the page—probably 2x2's, the captions will identify where the examples of art can be found*)

Artistic expression plays a critical role in the definition of neighborhoods all over the city. At its best, public art reflects the character and aspirations of the community, as well as the history that created the community.

Public art should meet high standards, but at the same time should never be defined narrowly. Public art is more than statues. It also includes a wide range of sculptures, monuments, plaques and other interpretive materials, creatively designed street furniture, gateways and fencing, building details, art display cases, murals, water fountains and pools, inspired uses of light, landscaping, decorative facades with distinctive building materials, and even special sidewalk and boardwalk design.

Boston already boasts a great diversity of public art – the statues along Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Downtown monuments to Hungarian nationalists and Irish famine victims, the Don Quixote sculpture on the Boston Common, the Fenway war memorials, the Villa Victoria mural in the South End, the head statue at the National Center for Afro-American Artists, the Louis Brown memorial in Dorchester, the Chinatown gateway, the 54th Civil War Regiment frieze, the Boston University monument to Martin Luther King, the University of Massachusetts sculpture garden, and wind sculptures in the Financial District and the New England Aquarium.

On this page are images of several different kinds of public art that can be found all over Boston. As Bostonians consider what kind of an identity they want to express for their neighborhoods, they may consider the possibilities of adapting these kinds of expression to their own histories and cultures.

Public Art funding

Since the founding and development of major museums and cultural institutions in Boston, the city government has not played an active role in funding or coordinating culture and the arts. The Museum of Fine Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art, the New England Aquarium, the Children's Museum, and the Museum of African American Artists have always been self-sustaining.

A number of other cities make major efforts to fund and coordinate the arts. A brief look:

✓ In San Francisco, a flat 2 percent of the gross estimated construction cost for all new civic buildings, major building renovations, transportation projects new parks and other structures like bridges goes to artwork. Twenty percent of the funds acquired is set aside for the cost of actually running the program, while the remaining money goes to the pieces themselves. Revisions of the city's public art ordinance in 1996 permit the pooling of art enrichment funds with other city departments. The revisions also call for 5 percent of the funds be dedicated to maintaining existing artwork. These funds are placed in an interest bearing account so that an endowment can be established for future conservation.

✓ In Chicago, 1.33 percent of funds for constructing or renovating municipal buildings are set aside for the commission or purchase of art. Public Advisory Committees, which represent a broad range of Chicago residents, select the art and a Commission of representatives from "the art world" then must approve these selections. The city also maintains a slide registry of all public art in Chicago. Additionally, the Chicago Public Art Program has organized several special projects to showcase the city's cultural attractions, including a photographic mural by Chicago photographers and an exhibit of historic stained-glass windows collected from Chicago buildings at O'Hare International Airport.

✓ The City of Albuquerque's Art in Municipal Places Ordinance provides that 1 percent of General Obligation Bond Funds approved for capital expenditures can be authorized for the commission, execution, and installation of works of art. Between 15 and 20 percent of these funds are directed toward conservation and maintenance of public art. Albuquerque depends also upon private and public donations of artwork and money in addition to the city's Urban Enhancement Trust Fund. This fund sets aside money "for beautification and cultural projects that enhance the ambiance of the City." Citizens, neighborhood organizations and cultural groups which have a vision for a particular project can submit applications to receive grants from this fund.

✓ The public art program in Portland, run by the Regional Arts and Cultural Council, coordinates efforts for the whole metropolitan area. The program includes a 1.33 percent levy for art for all major city construction projects. One of Portland's innovative initiatives is Blank Wall Guidelines, which considers public art as an alternative to meeting the City of Portland Building Code's ground floor window requirements. The Public Art selection and installation process is run by a Committee of arts professionals appointed by the Mayor; a subcommittee considers individual proposals. (The smaller committee usually is made up mostly of arts professionals but also includes one citizen who "may be from the neighborhood in question.") The RACC maintains a computer database of all artworks owned by the city and county. A fraction of RACC funds is allocated for maintenance of these pieces. Portland also has a policy for withdrawing artwork which is no longer appreciated by the public.

Redevelopment challenges

Dozens of historic buildings all over Boston offer the opportunity for rehabilitation and reuse, but many of the structures have been allowed to deteriorate to the point that they are endangered. Raising the needed money and adhering to strict redevelopment standards are the major challenges facing preservation efforts.

A 1999 survey of historic properties by Historic Boston, Inc., highlighted 40 properties across the city that are in danger of being lost to structural deficiencies that come with years of disuse or neglect. The buildings face a number of challenges, such as:

- ✓ **Damage to historic features from poor conversion**. Rehabilitation of historic structures without adequate understanding of the detailing and functions that make the buildings special could ruin structures even when they remain in use. The facades of the Allston Hall Block in Allston and Eblana Brewery/Hampden Auto Parts in Mission Hill have been damaged by unthoughtful rehabbing.
- ✓ **Shape, footprint, and location of building**. The odd shapes of buildings often owe to the peculiar circumstances and location of their construction. With demanding rehabilitation code standards, retrofitting these structures for new purposes can be costly. The location near highways and other destructive activities often hurts buildings' prospects for rehabilitation, as well. Examples of buildings in this category include 119 Merrimac Street (The Flatiron Building) and Adams House/Bijou Theater in the Downtown, Upham's Corner Market in Dorchester, Eustice Street firehouse in Roxbury, and the Suffolk County Jail in the West End.
- ✓ **Competing economic and building imperatives**. Often, government agencies, preservationists, and community groups cannot agree on the best use for a building. A lack of consensus has made redevelopment difficult for the Herter center and Chestnut Hill Reservoir pump houses in Allston-Brighton; the Adams House/Bijou Theater Downtown; the Baker Mill Powerhouse in Dorchester; the Joseph Barnes School in East Boston; the Home for Aged Couples and Pinebank in Jamaica Plain; Gloucester Memorial Presbyterian Church Complex, Houghton Vienna Brewery, and the Mission Church complex in Mission Hill; the Roslindale Substation in Roslindale; the Hibernian Hall and Hotel Dartmouth in Roxbury; the Old Northern Avenue Bridge in South Boston; the Hotel Alexandra in the South End; and the Court Square Press Building in South Boston.
- ✓ **Deterioration due to weather or fire damage**. Years without maintenance can bring about rapid deterioration with snow, rain, sun, and wind. Structures that have been damaged by the elements include Modern Theater, Opera House, and Paramount Theater Downtown; Everett Hall Theater in Hyde Park; Highland Spring Brewery in Mission Hill; the Elevated Railway Central Power Station in the South End; and Print Shop at Brook Farm in West Roxbury.
- ✓ **Inadequate maintenance and resources**. Lack of attention can lead to an accumulation of damages to buildings. Examples include the Bay Village townhouse in the South End, Hoosic Store No. 3 in Charlestown, the old Quincy School in Chinatown, the Calf Pasture Pumping Station at Columbia Point in Dorchester, Christ Church of Hyde Park, St. Stephen's Church in the North End, Alvah Kitrtredge House and Alvah Kittredge Park rowhouses in Roxbury, and Sts. Peter and Paul Church in South Boston.

✓ **Need for environmental remediation**. Environmental damage due to dangerous building materials or disposal of toxins on the site often make the cost of renovation prohibitive. The Boston Sanatorium in Mattapan, which has asbestos problems, is a prime example.

For more informnation about these sites, see *Preservation Revolving Fund Casebook 1999*, published by Historic Boston, Inc. Call (617) 227-4679 for more information.

SIDE Rehab pays

The historic preservation movement began as an effort by a small band of activists to save history from the wrecking balls of new development. The movement focused on buildings and public spaces with significant architecture or where important historic events had taken place. But in recent years, the preservation movement has become a major approach to promoting community, minority empowerment, and home-grown businesses.

Traditional preservationists have played a major role in protecting the heritage of the United States. Their efforts focused on old mansions and estates, houses, hotels and apartment buildings, post offices, court houses, and storefronts. The movement has also saved historic relics that have taken on an iconic character, such as the Citgo sign in Kenmore Square.

But in the last generation, preservationists have confronted urban renewal, large-scale development, and highways and other projects. By addressing these larger concerns, preservationism has become a sophisticated strategy for reviving whole neighborhoods. Strategic preservation has turned many urban neighborhoods around in Boston. The conversion of the old Baker Chocolate Factory was critical to the revival of Lower Mills in Dorchester.

Studies have shown that preservationism not only improves the overall character of a community, but actually delivers a greater economic impact that new development. A major study called *The Economics of Preservation* found major benefits in spending $1 million for rehabilitation instead of $1 million for new construction, including:

- ✓ $120,000 more dollars will initially stay in the community.
- ✓ Five to nine more construction jobs will be created.
- ✓ 4.7 more additional jobs will be created elsewhere in the community.
- ✓ Household incomes will increase $107,000 more.
- ✓ Retail sales will increase by $142,000, $34,000 more than new construction.

Besides generating economic activity that tends to stay closer to home, also leaves more money in local hands for investment in employment and future development. Startup businesses are especially attracted to old buildings, which require less money for rents and purchase.

Rehabilitation takes advantage of existing infrastructure. Roads, transit routes, utilities, retail centers, warehouses, and other facilities are already in place and usually require less public investment to bring up to the needs of businesses and residents than brand-new development.

Rehabilitation also dramatically increases the character of a community. A community's historic character attracts visitors, businesses, and new residents who are seeking a more "authentic" neighborhood life. Neighborhoods like Beacon Hill, Charlestown, Back Bay, the North End, South Boston, and parts of Dorchester and Roxbury have improved property values and local economic activity by rehabbing buildings to create more richly textured community environments.

Redevelopment of existing structures is a critical part of an anti-sprawl strategy. Many old buildings not only offer opportunities for reuse, but are also located near vacant parcels where new construction is appropriate. The creation of a mix of old and new buildings offers an alternative to new development in communities further and further from the center of the city.

Because of both economic and social benefits, the noted economist John Kenneth Galbraith has praised the preservation movement's impact. "The preservation movement has one great curiosity," Galbraith once remarked. "There is never retrospective controversy or regret. Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact."

SIDE Rehab subcode

Renovating old buildings to meet today's goals of safety, health, and accessibility is one of the major challenges facing older cities like Boston. A new code developed by a New Jersey state agency provides a model to reduce the costs and time required for rehabilitation of existing structures without sacrificing safety.

This innovation in urban redevelopment should be emulated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston. Its adoption would create powerful new incentives for investment in the city.

The new "rehab subcode" in New Jersey establishes a separate code that allows for greater reuse of old buildings. In its first year, the rehab subcode contributed to a 50 percent increase in renovation projects in the state's major cities. Rehabilitation spending increased 83 percent in the first year of the new code in Jersey City, 59 percent in Newark, and 40 percent in Trenton. The new code, in effect, opens up many inner-city neighborhoods for development for the first time.

For a century, the code for rehabilitating buildings has been tied to the code for construction of new buildings. Linking code requirements for old and new buildings often undermined efforts to rehabilitate existing structures. Modern standards for doors, windows, ceilings, floors, stairs, setbacks, and fire escapes would require major overhauls of old buildings, with few safety benefits.

As in most American states and cities – including Massachusetts and Boston – the old New Jersey subcode operated with a 25/50 rule. This rule required rehab work worth 25 percent of the building's value to bring the affected parts of the structure up to modern building code. Work worth 50 percent or more of the building's value required bringing the whole structure up to modern building standards.

The 25/50 rule was especially harmful to efforts to improve inner-city buildings and neighborhoods. Because the assessed value of those buildings were low, virtually any significant rehab work required bringing the whole building to new-building standards. That is too much for most developers, especially when the real-estate market is hot and other opportunities are available elsewhere.

The key to the code's success is allowing alternatives to new building code standards to achieve the same goals. For example:

- ✓ Sprinkler systems are allowed to protect against the dangers of fire, instead of additional exits and fire escapes.
- ✓ Door widths, windows, and stairs dimensions are allowed to fall short of the standards for new buildings.
- ✓ Smaller setbacks are allowed for buildings.
- ✓ Sagging floors can be fixed with the use of materials that fill in the floor rather than requiring major improvements in the columns that hold up the foundation.
- ✓ Alternative approaches to providing for access for handicapped persons are allowed.
- ✓ Developers are given wide latitude in reusing old buildings for new uses. Garages have been converted to homes, auto dealerships to restaurants and galleries, and warehouses to offices and apartments.

As a result of New Jersey's success, a number of other states and cities have adopted their own version of the code. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is adapting the New Jersey code into a national model. The three major associations that establish regional building standards are also using the New Jersey code as a model for revamping their standards.

School-building considerations

The city of Boston has a school-age population of about 63,000 students who are taught in 129 school buildings with an average age of __ years. Two-thirds of the schools were built before 1945 putting building new school facilities on the agenda for many neighborhoods in Boston. There are a number of considerations that should inform longterm school facility planning, including:

- ✓ **A needs assessment.** The city should assess the different programming needs of elementary, middle, and high schools in the city to determine what types of schools need to be built and with what facilities.
- ✓ **Educational needs.** The design of school buildings should reflect the needs of the school. Different activities need different classrooms. It is necessary to have appropriate spaces for the different classes within the school; art and music must have their own places along with the regular classrooms.
- ✓ **Technology**. Technology is one of the areas in which urban schools are lagging behind their suburban peers. Technology is an integral part of the work world, so must it become an integral part of schools. Schools and classrooms must be designed to support it.
- ✓ **Communities of 200**. Many educators are calling for small schools. The Blue Ribbon Commission's report on schools also calls for middle schools to be between 400-600 students and high schools to be between 300-350 students. Schools larger than this should be subdivided into separate schools.
- ✓ **Multi-use needs**. Schools are primarily for student learning, but they also can be used for other related activities, such as after-school programs, adult education courses, community meeting space, and providing meals to students and perhaps their parents. This idea has caught on in many Boston communities where there are Community Learning Centers. In a school system where 71% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, providing other meals at school would likely be a real benefit to the student. Even without supplying anything extra, having a place open for students to study would help students who do not have a place to study at home.
- ✓ **Adaptability of internal spaces for re-use**. Educational philosophy is continually changing and improving. The schools that are built now need to have flexible spaces so that the rooms can adapt with changing program needs of the school. There need to be flexible classrooms, to accommodate large and small groups; and flexible buildings where schools can be divided into smaller schools or clusters. The new demands on schools as community learning centers also demands more flexible work spaces to accommodate the different activities.
- ✓ **Connections to community spaces.** In a dense urban area like Boston, there are many other public spaces of which the a school could take advantage, such as nearby parks, libraries, historic sites and community centers. Often these spaces are abutting and should also have some continuity between the spaces. The library and the elementary school should have a connection so that the open space around the library and the school can be common space for user of either institutions.
- ✓ **Block size**. One aspects of the urban environment that makes a livable city is block size. Small blocks provide the most efficient way for people to walk around the city. They also

contribute to the safety of the blocks by increasing their usage. State requirements for new schools currently and unnecessarily call for more space than can be found in a city and would destroy the scale of the neighborhood in which the school is being built. Preserving small blocks needs to be a priority when designing new schools.

- ✓ **Parking**. Schools usually require some parking for faculty and staff who have no access to public transportation. This can be a challenge in an urban area. Creating parking for new schools must be done in such as way as to preserve the urban fabric of the area. Some solutions could be to restrict on-street parking through special school permits during the times when teachers might need to park, or building underground parking beneath already existing school buildings.
- ✓ **Convenient access to mass transit**. One way to alleviate the parking problem is to have better access to public transportation from the school. This is an important criteria in the choosing the placement of a new school, but it is also an issue for existing schools. Some possible ideas to improve existing schools include creating shuttles that run from nearby subway stations, or putting schools on area bus routes and running extra buses at the beginning and end of every school day.

Many factors complicate the placement of schools throughout the city. The school committee is in the process of evaluating the desegregation policies which will influence the placement of any new schools, as will the changing demographics of city and neighborhood population. The current distribution of facilities across the city influences the locations of the new facilities, but these decisions are somewhat limited by the availability of parcels for development.

Signage

Providing good signage for residents, commuters, and visitors requires coordination of a number of public, nonprofit, and private groups.

A number of characteristics are needed for a system, of good signage:

✓ **Simplicity.** The city now suffers from a confusing collection of different sign styles and combinations. The uneven quality of the signs stems in part from the many different agencies and institutions that post signs – federal, state, and city agencies, hospitals, universities, museums, and historic districts. Some signs are informative and well-placed, but others are illegible and randomly placed. Pics of great & awful signs

✓ **Layering.** To keep signs as simple but also as informative as possible, signs need an elegant system of layering. For example, some districts might desire special designation on street signs – which would be possible with a consistent format of edges to basic signs. The new signs along Huntington Avenue for the Avenue of the Arts could be a model for marking districts in the city. Development of a district "layer" could help improve neighborhood identity while at the same time making neighborhoods feel less isolated from the rest of the city.

✓ **Comprehensiveness.** In a city like Boston with literally hundreds of attractions for residents and visitors alike, it is probably impossible to rely on street signs to guide people to each major park, museum, hospital, school or university, and historic district. But public signs should guide all drivers and walkers to the major sections of the city, and all of the major destinations should be targeted within their districts. A layered system should help people connect to the right area of the city, with signs inside the district directing people to specific destinations.

✓ **Follow-up.** Many signs promise the viewer an attraction that is in fact many miles away – and then provide little or no additional assistance for the person following the signs. Drivers entering the Fenway from Storrow Drive, for example, see a sign for Franklin Park. But since Franklin Park lies four miles away on a confusing route of twisting and turning roads, the sign is more confusing than helpful.

✓ **Consistency.** Road signs should be provided at most if not all of the intersections along major streets. Travelers along major streets like Washington Street, Melnea Cass Boulevard, Blue Hill Avenue, and Columbia Road only see signs at the endpoints of the major streets, but should see them at intersections along the way. In a city that attracts so many short-term residents, workers, and visitors, knowledge of even the major streets should never be assumed. Pic of streetsign at intersection

✓ **Information at the nodes.** The system of street signage should be complemented by a system of information kiosks throughout the city. The kiosks should offer detailed maps of the immediate vicinity, marking all major destinations. The kiosks should also provide a citywide map placing the district into larger perspective. Pic of st furn model

✓ **Accuracy.** Many signs in the city are inaccurate. The Boston Transportation Department has adopted a new database system to keep track of sign location and repair needs. This database system should improve the location and maintenance of signs. Information from the database should be shared with other jurisdictions that bear responsibility for signage, such as the U.S.

Highway Administration, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the Metropolitan District Commission.